



# Into the Unknown

## 2017 Environmental Scan

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# INTO THE UNKNOWN

This year, more than most, holds peril for futurists and prognosticators. Even scientific polling failed to predict the outcome of a US election that will undoubtedly have profound consequences for the globe, and for Canada. President Obama's "better angels of our nature" have now cleaved to narcissism, nihilism and xenophobic exceptionalism. But aside from pockets of nativist envy in Canada – tragically revealed in the Quebec City mosque attack - there is little evidence that Canadians are as prepared to abandon Obama's hopeful entreaty.

Not since 1967 have Canada and the US parted ways so profoundly. Having recused itself from the Vietnam War, implemented a national pension plan and universal health care, and wrapping itself in a new flag, Canada was expressing its independence, confidence and swagger, symbolized in the jubilant Expo 67, while America was enmeshed in cultural turmoil. Then, as now, there is a profound divide between the orthodoxy-challenging values and aspirations of the young and the insecurities of the entitled.

Half a century later, with the election of Donald Trump, who could govern anywhere on the spectrum from Trickster "bluedog" Democrat to self-aggrandizing Peron-esque fascist, this next chapter in the collapse of the US empire bodes poorly for global peace, stability and shared prosperity.<sup>1</sup> The only questions are the rate and form of decay and to what degree other nations will feel the collateral damage. Or, perhaps, this jolt of massive change, of unabashed disruption, will renew American vitality and unleash innovation.

In rather sharp contrast, Canada – Alberta included - has entered a period of activist government, social liberalism and – most importantly – a conversation about national reconciliation. As all Canadian institutions are challenged to examine their biases, blind spots and colonial tendencies, we are called to embrace Indigenous notions of wisdom, reciprocity, love and respect for each other and for the earth that has given us life. A Canada with a stronger sense of itself, with greater moral courage, mutuality and sense of place will be an interesting juxtaposition to our southern neighbour, which will more than likely be steeped in cultural, political and social chaos for the foreseeable future.

In this light, and reflecting on The Calgary Foundation's focus on belonging, it is worth repeating the words of Reconciliation Canada founder Chief Robert Joseph, from his blog post on the morning after the US election<sup>2</sup> :

*We must take this moment as an opportunity for reflection: to reflect on what kind of society we want to build for ourselves and for our children, and to ask the questions: Who are we as a people? Who are we as a country? How can we build stronger, more resilient communities?*

*Our children look to us for guidance, and we have an opportunity to be the role-models that they deserve. Let us teach our children the values of empathy, love, compassion and humility, and cultivate a society that allows all peoples to reach their optimum potential.*

*Our relationships transcend borders, boundaries, backgrounds and cultures. I encourage you to reach*

*out and listen whole-heartedly to your neighbours and peers. Embrace their unique strengths and diverse perspectives, and understand the interconnectedness that exists among us.*

*Right now, we are caught in a place between fear and hope. Reconciliation, in all its forms, requires patience, openness and courage. Now, more than ever, I urge you to stay the course. Do not get weary.*

## SCANNING THE HORIZON

In March of 2015, the Institute provided a scan of major current socio-economic trends and developments, at local, provincial, national and international scales, relevant to the work of The Calgary Foundation (TCF). The scan was then [updated](#) in October, 2015.<sup>3</sup>

This current scan, however, entirely replaces the previous scan with new themes, information and citations. Most of the trends covered in the more elaborate [2015 scan](#) are still very much in play – shifts in how we think about education, the poverty trap, the need to invest in community leadership, the rise of social innovation and the new mega-trends in philanthropy, to name a few. As such, it is best to consider this a companion piece. Like the previous scan, it is highly selective and ‘curated’ – it is far from a comprehensive analysis of all trends in all sectors.

The scan is organized under a set of themes, each of which uses multiple lenses – social, cultural, political, economic, environmental and technological:

- A Nationalist Resurgence
- Global Lethargy Tempers Commodity Come-back

- The Newfound Political Power of Millennials  
Gig Economy, Gigabyte Ethics
- From Reconciliation to Re-confederation
- Calgary... An Emerging Epicentre of Canadian Culture?
- Climate and Renewables: A Big Step Forward, a Bigger Step Back?
- Killing the Pain
- Dementia: The Sleeper Issue of the 21st Century?
- From Fighting Poverty to Building Prosperity
- Social Entrepreneurship: From Start-ups to Systems
- Still Holding Half the World Back

We have attempted to make this scan particularly relevant and useful to the five Vital Priorities identified in TCF's current Strategic Plan. It focuses on phenomena that directly impact the Foundation's interests in stewarding its financial and community investments and in nurturing a community where all belong. Information in this scan is derived from several sources, including news stories, op-eds, policy reports, academic literature and the research and learning experiences of the authors.

## A NATIONALIST RESURGENCE

The Calgary Foundation's emphasis on "belonging", one shared by MRU as the fulcrum of its communications strategy, is a value that the world is taking a second look at. The victorious 2016 Brexit campaign in Britain, led by the reactionary Nigel Farage of the UK Independence Party, was barely impeded by the shocking murder of a pro-Europe MP. Add to this the pan-Mediterranean refugee crisis, the vicious ISIS-allied attacks in Paris and Brussels, Wallonia's opposition (albeit short-lived) to the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), and – of course, the Trump victory. These developments have collectively emboldened movements in other European states to spurn pan-Europeanism in favour of populist nationalism and regionalism. Accompanying this is the slow but steady rise of proto-fascist parties like Geert Wilders' *Party for Freedom* in the Netherlands and Marine Le Pen's *National Front* in France. Such parties already hold the balance of power in Poland and Macedonia and have a significant plurality of seats in Denmark, Belgium and Austria. And this phenomenon is not confined to Europe. Australia, for instance, has essentially created an "archipelago of gulags" to detain unwelcome migrants.<sup>4</sup>

Aside from the fledgling campaign of one marginal Conservative party candidate (Kellie Leitch), Canada has no such movement. Continuing to be almost uniquely bullish on immigration as a force for good (in fact, the current conversation is about how aggressively we should be *increasing* our immigration targets), Canada may seem like more of an international safe-haven and potentially more of a power broker than it has historically been accustomed to being. German Chancellor Angela Merkel, arguably the world's most experienced

and powerful broker of multi-lateral consensus, will find Canada's "sunny ways" position and ethos to be immensely useful in keeping the reactionary tide at bay.<sup>5</sup> Add to this the strengthening of economic and political power in the Pacific basin (along with the rise of Chile, Peru, Malaysia, the Philippines and Mexico), the precarious state of Canadian allies like Ukraine and the Baltic states, and it seems inevitable that Canada will carry many new demands with respect to our engagement in global policy. A Security Council seat would almost certainly be in the offing, but consideration of this potentially poisoned chalice is another 5 years away.<sup>6</sup>

## GLOBAL LETHARGY TEMPERS COMMODITY COME-BACK

At only 3% global economic growth, 2016 was the most sluggish year since the financial crisis nearly a decade ago.<sup>7</sup> Resource-exporting countries like Canada will continue to suffer from low commodity prices, with 2% growth forecast for 2017, revised downward from last year's prediction of 2.6%. However, manufactured exports look strong with US domestic demand and business exports having picked up in the last two quarters of 2016. The Saudi-led OPEC plan to glut the market has not worked as well its architects had envisioned in crippling competitors. The US oil and gas sector, for example, is proving remarkably resilient, while Saudi public coffers are dwindling. On September 28, OPEC agreed to production limits, ending the 2-year experiment.<sup>8</sup> This may usher in a price jump, though tempered by low global demand. Through 2017, the price of oil is expected to nudge upward, ranging between the high 40s and mid 50s per barrel.<sup>9</sup> Although food and energy prices are normally in sync, beef prices have been astronomical over the past year. Alberta's industry

was set to benefit handsomely until the Fall, 2016 tuberculosis scare hit. With the US economy on the upswing, and markets initially reacting favourably to the election outcome, demand for Canadian goods and resources looks somewhat more promising into 2017. As one sign of this, one of the world's largest diamond mines – *Gahcho Kue* – just opened northeast of Yellowknife.

The obvious spanner in the works for the Canadian trade will be President-elect Trump's vow to "totally renegotiate" NAFTA. This is part of a more mainstream and broad-based antipathy toward free trade, no longer the narrative of just the left. Evidenced also in Senator Bernie Sanders' popularity and in Wallonia's ability to delay CETA, the goal of achieving new trade agreements with other markets is less certain than it used to be. The 2016 Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPAA) will likely languish for years before implementation, and there is a better than average chance it will never come to fruition. Canada is also under pressure to delay or decline ratifying the TPAA, opposition to it coming from well beyond organized labour, including from the dairy, tech and auto sectors. Jim Balsillie, for example, believes that the TPPA will kill Canadian innovation and is more likely to embed Canada in a series of new colonial relationships – entrenching our historic role as hewers and drawers of natural resources.<sup>10</sup> The Trump administration's melange of anti-trade and anti-regulation policy can be expected to send mixed signals to markets, leaving aside potentially greater volatilities associated with immigration policy, armed conflict and diplomatic fiascos.

As noted in the previous scan, Canada's economic growth is increasingly reliant on the real estate sector. And, like clockwork, economists continue to warn of an impending housing market 'correction' that never seems to happen. In a sense, though,

government intervention has helped the industry avoid such a collapse, through such measures as the recent tightening of mortgage rules for new homebuyers and the restriction on foreign ownership being implemented in the Vancouver market. Calgary's market has also cooled, for obvious reasons. Still, any forecast would be remiss in not including mention of a potential real estate bubble burst.

The Bank of Canada is expected to hold, if not cut further, its interest rates at under 1% through the coming year.<sup>11</sup> Ironically, this would happen at the very same time the US is expected to increase its rates. With so many variables in play, and the current market volatility, it is a fool's game to predict where the Canadian dollar will be by this time next year.

## THE NEWFOUND POLITICAL POWER OF MILLENNIALS

After many decades of declining youth participation in the electoral system, 2015 saw a major uptick, fueled by a Trudeaumania redux. Key early political moves, including appointing a more diverse cabinet, embracing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action, and committing the federal government, post-Paris, to climate change action, have proven popular with a young demographic. The creation of a youth cabinet portfolio (with Trudeau as the Minister responsible) and the appointment of a "youth cabinet", signals that in Canada the "millennial dream"<sup>12</sup> may be informing public policy more than anyone had expected.

The new federal government's commitment to enhance the democratic process, through electoral reform, implementation of an independent non-partisan Senate appointment process and small

innovations like publishing cabinet Mandate Letters, has been tarnished of late with allegations of pay-for-access, akin to the influence peddling allegations that dog Ontario's Wynne government. After shunning the work of an all-party committee, and conducting a public consultation in the guise of the blandly manipulative MyDemocracy.ca, the government has now dropped a key election promise of replacing the "first past the post" electoral system. Electoral reform at the federal level will most likely have to wait for a future election with a minority government outcome to have any hope of resurfacing.

While the honeymoon phase of the Trudeau government may be coming to an end, particularly with respect to Federal-Provincial relations, the Conservative and NDP parties are both in a very weakened state. The former's leadership race has a large field of obscure or unpopular leadership candidates. The NDP is in less of a hurry to replace current leader Tom Mulcair, whose lame-duck status is now well ensconced. Knowing that the major shift from Layton to Mulcair was in the youth vote bleeding to the Liberals, it is a safe bet that the NDP leader, once chosen, will be of the millennial generation.

## GIG ECONOMY, GIGABYTE ETHICS

More and more economists are noting the permanent structural changes in employment and financial equity between citizens, communities and regions. There is not only a digital divide; A profound economic divide is also emerging. Self-driving cars, fintech, massive open online education; The nature of work and availability of jobs are being, and will continue to be, profoundly disrupted. The UK's Chief Economist warned that 15 million

human jobs are likely to be replaced by machines within the next decade.<sup>13</sup> This will affect men in greater numbers than women. A major long-term risk to global security is, arguably, the proliferation of unemployed, socially isolated men who have stopped looking for jobs<sup>14</sup> (and who are increasingly outnumbered and outperformed by women in higher education).

Prime Minister Trudeau, speaking at the Davos summit earlier in the year, made the following statement:

*"It's not hard to see how the connections between computing, information, robotics, and biotechnologies could deliver spectacular progress. It's also not hard to imagine how it could produce mass unemployment and greater inequality. Technology itself will not determine the future we get. Our choices will. Leadership will."<sup>15</sup>*

Much more entrenched than outright unemployment is the increasing prevalence of short-term, low-paying jobs. The rise of the 'on-demand', or 'gig', economy posits that innovation could be unleashed with the kind of labour flexibility that accompanies freelancers, lean start-ups and 'makers' (including artisans, craft designers and micro-scale manufacturers).<sup>16</sup> Often, the notion of the on-demand economy is conflated with the rise of the 'sharing economy', where goods and services are exchanged or bartered between citizens, typically facilitated through an online platform. Uber drivers and AirBnB hosts are also part of this gig economy. But the 'shadow' side of the sharing economy, expected to be worth \$335 billion by 2025<sup>17</sup>, is the loss of millions of jobs in industries like hospitality/hoteling and transportation.

The other unfortunate corollary of the gig economy, one that philanthropy futurist Lucy Bernholz has drawn attention to, is that salaried jobs with

benefits will become the exception more than the rule of how employment is experienced for most people.<sup>18</sup> This is already effecting many sectors, and characterizes 75% of the world's workforce. In the US, 34% of employment is considered "freelance", not including part-time and other forms of precarious employment.<sup>19</sup> For instance, academia is much more reliant on relatively low-paid contract instructors than it is on expensive long-term tenure-track appointments. The ramifications for public policy and government expenditures are significant.

The social safety net will have to be decoupled from salaried jobs and be universalized such that independent workers also benefit. The Canada Pension Plan will become far more critical to the post-career livelihoods of Canadians than private or public pension plans. RRSPs and tax-free savings accounts are a viable supplement only to a relatively narrow band of upper-middle income Canadians. Universal pharmacare is likely to find its way onto the public agenda, made more pressing by the cost of prescription drugs spiralling out of control, a problem particularly acute in Canada. And, as reported in last year's scan, the push for a guaranteed annual income has become – and will continue to be – much more prevalent on both the right and left of the political spectrum. In fact, a guaranteed annual income may become essential to supporting entrepreneurship and unleashing innovation among the precariously and marginally employed.<sup>20</sup>

In the tech world, many are fearing that the Trump administration may put an end to "net neutrality".<sup>21</sup> The notion of the internet as a commons, with equal access for all enterprises and users, is a principle the Obama administration had defended through Federal Communications Commission rules. Trump's desire to "close off parts of the internet" may have a more difficult time surviving

a constitutional challenge. Meanwhile, predictive analytics, machine learning apps and other new technologies will further blur the line between real and virtual life with uncanny matching of information consumption and retail experiences to people's tastes and preferences.<sup>22</sup>

Marketing, social media, charity and social advocacy will continue to converge in interesting ways, with new apps such as Social Toaster and services like Calgary-based *Benevity* changing the way we align with brands and how we mobilize our peers and colleagues to causes we care about. As Ben Paynter notes, "The social good halo is becoming a powerful tool for brands...90% of consumers view social and environmental responsibility as a key part of a brand's appeal."<sup>23</sup> The number of social media users globally is now pushing 3 billion, with video-based social media skyrocketing – Snapchat alone has over 10 billion video views daily. We are also seeing the rise of blockchain technology that can securely move and store data in a globally distributed format (rather than being housed under a centralized trusted administrator), the best known example being Bitcoin.<sup>24</sup> Several companies are also making large new investments in the development of artificial intelligence.<sup>25</sup>

## FROM RECONCILIATION TO RE-CONFEDERATION

On June 29th, the Federal Court of Appeal overturned an Order in Council approving Enbridge's Northern Gateway project after finding that the Crown had failed to properly consult the First Nations affected by the pipeline.<sup>26</sup> This decision did not extend, but rather confirmed, the evolution of judicial interpretation, which reached a plateau in the 2014 *Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia* case, affirming the requirement for Aboriginal nations to not merely be consulted, but to consent

to development on their lands and traditional territories. This new bar is further underscored by the “Free, Prior and Informed Consent” provisions within the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, in turn reinforced through the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.<sup>27</sup>

Indeed, the most challenging part of reconciliation, particularly for Alberta, desperate to get more of its petroleum to tidewater, may be this imperative for consent. Yet, as former Supreme Court Justice Frank Iacobucci states, “the path to reconciliation starts with consent.”<sup>28</sup> With Northern Gateway and the Canada East pipeline projects in serious peril, and with clouds of protest still looming over the Kinder Morgan project, it may seem odd to suggest that 2017 might contain a pipeline breakthrough (aside from Keystone XL, which appears to be back on the table). But an historic lack of trust and apparent dearth of industry experience with respect to best practices in resource sector-community relations may now be reversing, with many industry players moving from compliance to relationship-building as the prime motivator.<sup>29</sup> Already we have witnessed federal support, bolstered by First Nations support (albeit not unanimous) for a new liquefied natural gas facility.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has repeatedly expressed a desire to transform the relationship between the federal government and Indigenous peoples, with a lofty election promise of implementing all 94 of the TRC’s Calls to Action, and with a new generation of Indigenous changemakers, along with terminally ill Canadian rock icon Gord Downie, holding his feet to the fire. Many other public, private and non-profit institutions are also taking concrete steps to embrace and enact reconciliation, a trend that is likely to continue and intensify over the coming year. The 4Rs movement,

Canadian Roots Exchange, Canadians for a New Partnership, Canada Bridges and Reconciliation Canada are among the new civil society initiatives that are sewing new ties between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Over 50 foundations have signed the *Philanthropic Community’s Declaration of Action* (although only one Calgary-based foundation- the Suncor Energy Foundation – is so far listed as having signed the Declaration). Mayor Naheed Nenshi opens many of his speeches in Blackfoot, and acknowledgement of territory is now as ubiquitous as the phrase “ladies and gentlemen”. The iconic Langevin Bridge will be renamed “Reconciliation Bridge”. The new west-side development of Medicine Hill – or *Aiss ka pooma* – will contain Blackfoot street names suggested by Elders. Meanwhile, accompanying the southwest leg of the ring road, the T’suu T’ina nation is proposing one of the largest First Nations-led developments ever envisioned within Canada, including an innovation and research park.

As the TRC report noted, education is the key to reconciliation. Calgary institutions are among those in Canada taking up this challenge. The Calgary Catholic School Board recently tabled its “ReconsiliACTION” plan. Alberta will become the first jurisdiction outside of the territorial north to establish a training program for all 42,000 teachers in the province to instruct in First Nations, Métis and Inuit history and perspectives.<sup>30</sup> Symbolized in the permanent raising of the Treaty 7 and Metis Nation flags in October, alongside the Canada and Alberta flags, Mount Royal University is implementing an ambitious Indigenous Strategic Plan, with profound effects on recruitment, student life, curricula, teaching practice and campus space.<sup>31</sup> The University of Calgary has also established an Indigenous Strategy Task Force.

## CALGARY... AN EMERGING EPICENTRE OF CANADIAN CULTURE?

This past year witnessed the opening of the most important new addition to Calgary's cultural landscape in a generation. Studio Bell, home of the National Music Centre, has opened to near-universal acclaim, both for its architecture and the breadth and interactivity of its exhibits. It is an emphatically Canadian institution that accomplishes what art is supposed to do – to get us to understand something about ourselves. Alongside other recent openings – notably the DJD Dance Centre and MRU's Bella Concert Hall, Studio Bell greatly enhances Calgary's claim to being a serious cultural centre. Other projects on the horizon include the cSpace cultural hub, Contemporary Calgary's re-imagining of the former science centre and the recently announced partnership between Wordfest and the Public Library to convert Memorial Park Library into a beltline cultural hub.

The City of Calgary's new Cultural Plan was tabled in 2016. It recognized the role of creative, diverse cities as nodes of innovation and entrepreneurship, which mirrors the vision of the Calgary Arts Development-led Living a Creative Life movement, where *"Calgary is a place that empowers every resident to live a creative life, fuelling a vital, prosperous and connected city."*<sup>32</sup> In the citizen and stakeholder feedback stage of the plan, the blending, inversion and playful re-mixing and re-interpretations of "western" and other cultural motifs was noted. This can be expected to accompany a growing desire for authentic cultural experiences as Calgary's population increases and diversifies. By 2020, Calgary's immigrant population is expected to reach almost half a million, with visible minorities comprising over a third of the city's population.<sup>33</sup> The desire to more intentionally

and visibly acknowledge Indigenous Peoples in the cultural, heritage and built landscapes was also expressed through this process, also through the Creative Congresses that have been convened in each of the last few autumns.

## CLIMATE AND RENEWABLES: A BIG STEP FORWARD, A BIGGER STEP BACK?

For much of the past few decades, global alarm bells about climate change have remained distant and abstract to much of the public. These past few years, and in 2016 in particular, Albertans are more acutely, locally and regularly experiencing the effects of climate change. Glacial melt, extended heat waves, and more extreme weather events are the new normal. However, for the first time, we have a universal, legally binding global climate agreement that is expected to be adopted by the majority of the world's nations. China, Canada, the European Union and the U.S. (temporary though this may be) have already ratified the agreement. The Paris Agreement aims to hold the increase in average temperature to well below 2°C and pursuing efforts to limit this increase to 1.5°C. This is no small task, given that global temperatures this year were 1.3% higher than historic averages. The 1.5°C benchmark, and perhaps even the 2°C goal may well be "false optimism", particularly in the wake of the Trump victory.<sup>34</sup> Among the many climate-related records set this year is one astounding statistic: According to NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center "each of the first six months of 2016 set a record as the warmest respective month globally in the modern temperature record."<sup>35</sup>

Described by Sir Nicholas Stern as the "greatest market failure the world has ever seen", climate change will have profound impacts on economies

and financial markets over the coming decades. There is an increased portfolio risk for investors related to various climate change scenarios, and more and more foundations are thinking carefully about exposure to climate sensitive asset classes.<sup>36</sup> 2016 saw the first three Canadian foundations sign on to the *Divest-Invest Philanthropy movement*.<sup>37</sup> The fossil fuel divestment movement, according to one estimate, has now reached \$3.4 trillion in divested assets from nearly 600 institutions and over 50,000 individuals.<sup>38</sup> While this is not music to most Calgarians' ears, our prosperity owing to fossil-fuel development, it remains a risk consideration for long-term portfolios, including philanthropic endowments. Even Bank of England Governor Mark Carney has spoken of the significant investment risk associated with "stranded assets", including oil sands projects that may never get built.<sup>39</sup>

Perhaps the greatest dissonance in public policy between Canada and the new US administration will be on the climate change file. After ratifying the Paris climate agreement last month and announcing a Canada-wide strategy to price carbon (with provision to permit provinces to implement equivalent cap-and-trade approaches in lieu)<sup>40</sup>, Canada is now having to radically revisit its assumption that the US would be in lock-step in working to mitigate climate change.

The Alberta government also announced a far-reaching climate strategy, lauded by former President Obama, that implements a downstream price on carbon, phases out coal and aims to produce 30% of Alberta's electricity through renewables (5,000 megawatts by 2030).<sup>41</sup> Energy Efficiency Alberta (EEA) is a new provincial agency, the first of its kind in Alberta, that will deliver programs and services to help Albertans save energy and reduce emissions. Meanwhile, as the US gets set to Chair the US Arctic Council this

year, where climate change is – far and away – the most pressing multilateral policy challenge (and where the effects of climate change are most profound), the Arctic states and Indigenous Peoples organizations are fearing the worst.<sup>42</sup>

As jurisdictions – Alberta included – seek to ween themselves off coal, Donald Trump's rhetoric to the contrary notwithstanding, the future of natural gas, including LNG, looks bright. The long-term future of oil sands, with its high marginal cost amid depressed demand for the resource, induced in part through carbon pricing, may be considerably less rosy. Over the coming century, fuel-based energy supply will gradually, but relentlessly, be relegated to backup status, while solar, wind, geothermal and other technologies gain a greater (and cheaper) foothold. Elon Musk's long-bet uniting of Tesla and Solar City is just one example of the race to grow markets for zero emissions electric vehicles. Volkswagen, which became the world's largest automobile company in 2016, recently announced a major shift in production focus to all-electric vehicles, a strategic response to 'dieselgate'.

Also this past year, the roll-out of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) commenced. Governments at all levels, companies and civil society organizations are challenged to adopt or embrace the goals, which range from eliminating poverty to implementing clean energy to protecting life on land and in the water. Locally, Engineers Without Borders has been leading the push to have Calgary organizations acknowledge and act toward achieving the SDGs. Although most sub-national jurisdictions – Alberta and Calgary included - have not adopted the SDGs, certain related steps are worth noting, such as the announced protection of the Castle wildland near Pincher Creek and City Council's resolution to make cycle tracks a permanent feature of Calgary's transportation mix.

## KILLING THE PAIN

The downturn in the Alberta economy, with a loss of over 40,000 jobs in the energy sector alone, has inflicted tremendous short-term social suffering. Calgary's unemployment rate is the highest of all large cities in Canada, and the number of first time food bank users this year eclipsed 60,000.<sup>43</sup> Suicides are up 30% in the province.<sup>44</sup> Family violence is up 36% in Calgary, with 2,796 calls registered with the Calgary Police Service so far in 2016 alone.<sup>45</sup> In the first half of 2016, 338 Albertans died as a result of a fentanyl or other opioid overdose.<sup>46</sup> Beyond this, prescription opioid addiction has become an epidemic, not just among the poor, but also among more historically privileged populations. Vancouver's Insite pilot initiative notwithstanding, the notion of "harm reduction" has tended in the past to be met with a kind of reflexive moralizing from policy-makers, choosing to ignore research. But harm reduction is now going mainstream, with the Alberta government urging people to use take-home naloxone, among other new detox and addictions treatment measures.

The failed "war on drugs" now a distant memory, Canada is set this coming year to legalize recreational cannabis consumption. Questions remain about whether cannabis will be dispensed through liquor stores, or through more strictly regulated outlets, and whether a local 'craft' industry will be permitted to emerge, as is now happening in brewing. Or whether it will follow in the footsteps of big tobacco, with a small number of highly regulated corporate providers. Following Colorado, Washington, Oregon, Alaska and the District of Columbia, four more states have just voted to permit recreational marijuana – notably

California, which will be a game-changer for the industry - and many more have approved it for medical use.

## DEMENTIA: THE SLEEPER ISSUE OF THE 21ST CENTURY?

Dementia, which affects nearly 800,000 Canadians, 15% of whom are under 65 years of age, could very well be the health crisis of the century because of its rapid growth in the population and its profound social impacts.<sup>47</sup> While less of an imminent crisis in Calgary, which has a younger population than the Canadian average, the number of people experiencing dementia is expected to double by 2030, and reach 3 million by 2050, costing upwards of \$153 billion in direct health care costs as well as indirect costs associated with unpaid care.<sup>48</sup>

Despite this, seniors' mental health services remain chronically under-resourced, as are mental health services in rural Alberta. Meanwhile, there is growing recognition of the benefits of meditation and mindfulness on mental well-being, cognition, addictions treatment and delaying the effects of aging on the brain.<sup>49</sup> Relatedly, we need to do a better job of "connecting the dots" between mental health, access to nature, the arts and to Indigenous methods of achieving balance and healing.

## FROM FIGHTING POVERTY TO BUILDING PROSPERITY

On October 25, the *Enough for All* campaign – focused on reducing poverty in Calgary, was launched. Franco Savoia, Executive Director of Vibrant Communities noted at the launch that "great cities, those that prosper and are world class, are cities where everyone comes together and looks

after their neighbours.”<sup>50</sup> Encouragingly, Calgary’s homeless count has revealed a 17% drop, a trend reflected around the province, although the national average is up.<sup>51</sup> For the first time in a generation, the federal government has announced a National Housing Strategy.

There is also growing recognition that poverty is a human rights issue. We now know that the education achievement gap between children is severely impacted by poverty and housing affordability, and that it is revealed at an early age. As such, equality of opportunity, a foundation of western liberal democracies, will remain out of reach for millions.<sup>52</sup> No matter how strong our education system is (and in Alberta we are fortunate to have a very strong system), children do not have equivalent chances for success so long as poverty is with us. Promisingly, 190 of the world’s nations have now signed on, through the UN SDGs, to the goal of eliminating poverty by 2030. Following Medicine Hat’s lead, other Alberta cities can set an example.

In a similar vein to Savoia’s observation, Winnipeg-based Ashoka Fellow Shaun Loney has just released a book – *An Army of Problem Solvers* – that serves as a kind-of “Changemaking 101” guide. In it, he invokes Jane Jacobs’ maxim: “To seek ‘causes’<sup>53</sup> of poverty... is to enter an intellectual dead end because poverty has no causes. Only prosperity has causes.” Loney, who emphasizes that the quest for shared prosperity is actually embedded in the larger project of reconciliation, is part of a resurgence of the notion of “community economic development”, or CED, witnessed in Calgary through the leadership of Momentum, Thrive, the Alberta Community and Cooperative Association, the business association REAP and the growing embrace of social enterprise and social finance models. The Alberta Government is looking seriously at the role of CED, as is Calgary’s economic development

agency, including the potential for Nova Scotia-style Community Economic Development Investment Funds (CEDIFs) to unleash new community capital for community benefit. Another opportunity on the horizon, subject to enabling regulation, will be the emergence of community-owned renewable energy production, one such example being the new Alberta Solar Coop in the MD of Starland. Community-produced energy is a significant part of the electricity mix in Germany and other European countries. With respect to Indigenous Canadians, we are witnessing a shift away from “jobs and training” – fundamentally rooted in a western colonial frame – and toward a more holistic notion of Indigenous prosperity, partnership and co-production. While much of the CED movement is defined by local, we may be on the verge of seeing the rise of online “cooperativism”, where scaled platforms are owned and governed by users, as in a worker or consumer cooperative – Imagine an Uber owned by the drivers.<sup>54</sup> Calgary will be hosting a national conference on community economic development in September, 2017, where an array of models, policies and platforms will be highlighted.

## SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP: FROM START-UPS TO SYSTEMS

The level of enthusiasm for “social entrepreneurship” has been steadily rising over the past decade. But often, this is conflated with the rise of “social enterprise”. The latter is a business model (or, more accurately, a set of business models ranging from non-profit-run business activities to socially-oriented commercial business)<sup>55</sup>, whereas the former is really a mindset and mode of operating that is focused on developing and advocating for innovative solutions to society’s

most pressing social or environmental problems. Social entrepreneurship is, in a way, a leadership style. One that identifies assets, opportunities and resources where other people tend to see only problems. Typically, such leadership is manifest through the creation of a new social venture, whether nonprofit or commercial.

The founding of new social ventures – or start-ups – is the goal of many young people today, and is prized in universities and through awards such as the Hult Prize. It is supported through incubators, accelerators and – with young people – through organizations like Enactus and Junior Achievement. Many financial institutions like RBC, ATB and some credit unions are becoming significant investors in this space. As ATB's Alberta BoostR puts it:

*“we’re here for the mavericks, the dreamers, the makers, the doers, the thinkers, the believers.”<sup>56</sup>*

But certain aspects of the social entrepreneur approach have recently come under fire, principally in the tendency to exalt the founder – the “heropreneur” – and its ability to gloss over community context and system dynamics.<sup>58</sup>

The Stanford Social Innovation Review's most popular article in 2015 was called “the Dawn of Systems Leadership.”<sup>59</sup> The Institute for Community Prosperity has also recently produced a series of reports and articles on leadership, with a particular emphasis on the idea of “systems leadership”:

*“Systems leadership entails deep co-sensing – the blending of careful listening, honing our empathic responses to others, uncovering and discovering the real issues, interests and causal dynamics that lie beneath these surface symptoms. It requires the marshalling of adaptive and creative resilience, as well as moral courage, such that we can design or embrace systems that hold promise and avoid or transform systems that portend collapse.”<sup>60</sup>*

Identifying and addressing the root causes of systemic weaknesses and limitations is the key to social transformation. “Large systems change” is increasingly part of the vernacular of those who want to lead, innovate or invest in community betterment.<sup>61</sup>

Of particular interest to grantmaking foundations, we are also witness to advances in how we understand community impact. We are moving away from – or, more properly, better contextualizing – the role of simpler techniques like logic models and social return on investment, in favour of systems-appropriate tools such as developmental evaluation, communities of practice and collective impact. Calgary's Seniors Age-Friendly Strategy, the 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness, the Calgary Poverty Reduction Strategy (Enough for All), United Way's Vulnerable Youth Strategy and the Dementia Network are all examples of local initiatives that employ one or more of these advanced strategies. We now have resources like Innoweave, FSG, SiG and Tamarack that did not exist a few years ago. These entities are also reflecting on, and refining, how we measure community change, such as in Mark Cabaj and Liz Weaver's outstanding work on “Collective Impact 3.0”.<sup>62</sup> Thinking of the role of foundations in particular, one recent article noted that “researchers agree that it takes about a decade for societal changing projects to make a lasting impact.”<sup>63</sup> There are new calls for Canada to get serious about an R&D approach to social and community impact,<sup>64</sup> and the venerable *Stanford Social Innovation Review* is also now exploring the pathologies of social innovations that held promise but have gone terribly wrong, identifying part of the problem in our quest for new products and services (where we naturally tend to look for ‘outcomes’) rather than system process shifts in an acknowledged context of uncertainty.<sup>65</sup> Such interventions are timely as the federal

government is currently designing its *Inclusive Innovation* agenda and striking a steering committee on social finance and innovation.

The recognition of systems and collective approaches are evident in such recent innovations as the Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre, which employs an integrative child-centered service model with five public sector agencies (and is set to be replicated province-wide), The Alex Community Food Centre, which goes beyond emergency food provision in integrating community-building, training and nutrition, and the MESH mental health collaborative, which involves five service providers working together to overcome complex, interrelated barriers of mental health, employment, substance abuse, and housing.

## STILL HOLDING HALF THE WORLD BACK

2016 marked a century since women in Alberta were granted the right to vote, mere months after Manitoba and Saskatchewan, the first places in the British Empire to achieve such a milestone. So it comes as a surprising and sorry dose of twisted pathos 100 years later to hear the following encouragement contained in Hillary Clinton's concession speech:

*"...and to all of the little girls who are watching this, never doubt that you are valuable and powerful and deserving of every chance and opportunity in the world to pursue and achieve your own dreams."*<sup>66</sup>

This year, the unrelenting medieval ethos of ISIS, Boko Haram, Saudi Arabia and many other milder flavours throughout large parts of the globe is joined by the 'locker-room' misogyny of President Trump and his 'base'. The painting of women who have the temerity to run for office with labels of

'shrill', 'hysterical' and 'bitch', is something that sadly bleeds across the 49th parallel. PC Alberta leadership candidates Sandra Jansen and Donna Kennedy-Glans stepped down after accusations of sexist intimidation and 'bro-lash' thuggery. Premier Rachel Notley and members of her cabinet have endured online abuse of a breadth and veracity that belies Alberta's claim to being a civil society.<sup>67</sup> Calgary, meanwhile, scored a dismal 23rd place out of 25 Canadian cities in a study that looked at gaps between men's and women's access to economic security, personal security, education, health, and positions of leadership.<sup>68</sup>

Malala Yousafzai has said the world will not succeed so long as half of its citizens are held back. We can expect the global and Canadian conversations in 2017 to turn from polite feminism to something more urgent, challenging and brazen. At the same time, the smart money is on Lisa Raitt to become the next leader of the Federal Conservatives, and the one with arguably the best chance of unseating self-declared feminist Justin Trudeau in 2019.

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